

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 02734 231841Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 2734

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: MORE RUMORS AND TIDBITS ON THE EVE OF THE 25TH CONGRESS

REF: MOSCOW 2550, MOSCOW 2672

1. THE LATEST AND ONE OF THE MEATIER, FROM THE MOSCOW RUMOR MILL, WHICH WE REPORT FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH: A U.S. NEWSMAN WAS TOLD FEBRUARY 20 BY A SOVIET SOURCE, WHOM THE NEWSMAN DID NOT IDENTIFY THAT:

--ABOUT A YEAR AGO BREZHNEV, IN POOR HEALTH, DECIDED TO RETIRE AND REMOVED SHELEPIN IN ORDER TO PREVENT THE INFIGHTING WHICH SHELEPIN'S SUPPORTERS WOULD HAVE MADE INEVITABLE;

--IN SEPTEMBER OF 1975 BREZHNEV CHANGED HIS MIND;

--IN 1975 YOUNGER POLITICAL LEADERS WERE PUSHING KULAKOV TO TAKE OVER AS GENERAL SECRETARY IMMEDIATELY UPON BREZHNEV'S RETIREMENT SKIPPING THE TRANSITIONAL PHASE WITH KIRILENKO AT THE HELM. KULAKOV HAS SINCE SLIPPED IN POLITICAL STANDING, IN PART BECAUSE OF A MOVE BY OLDER OLIGARCHS TO DEPRIVE THE YOUNG OF A CANDIDATE AND IN PART BECAUSE OF OPPOSITION FROM SHCHERBITSKIY;

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 02734 231841Z

--PODGORNY IS ON THE WAY OUT, TO BE REPLACED BY DOBRYNIN OR GROMYKO (NOT KOSYGIN, BECAUSE THE BREZHNEV FACTION WANTS TO BLOCK MZUROV'S FURTHER RISE); A SIGN OF PODGORNY'S DEMISE WAS REMOVAL OF TOLKUNOV AS EDITOR OF IZVESTIYA, BECAUSE PODGORNY WAS ONE OF TOLKIHUNOV'S PATRONS;

--RAMANOV WILL BECOME A FULL POLITBURO MEMBER, FILLING SHELEPIN'S OLD POSITION AS HEAD OF THE TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION;

--ALTHOUGH HIGHLY REGARDED, SHCHERBITSKIY WILL STAY IN THE UKRAINE BECAUSE HE IS BADLY NEEDED THERE;

--BREZHNEV WILL SPEAK FOR ONLY SOME THREEE HOURS DURING THE FIRST DAY OF THE CONGRESS, ALTHOUGH HIS PRINTED TEXT WILL BE MUCH LONGER.

2. RUMORS, FLAGS AND POSTERS HAVE PROLIFERATED IN DOWNTOWN MOSCOW SINCE OUR LAST REPORT (MOSCOW 2672). WE HAVE NOTED TWO MORE LARGE PHOTOS OF BREZHNEV IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA: ONE ON THE CENTRAL EXHIBITION HALL (MANEZH); ANOTHER ON SEROVA STREET, ACROSS FROM THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE BUILDING. THERE ARE MANY PORTRAITS OF LENIN, SEVERAL OF MARX AND ENGELS, ONE OF CONTEMPORARY LEADERS OTHER THAN BREZHNEV.

3. MOSCOW HAS SPRUCED UP: BUSES HAVE BEEN WASHED, MOST OF THE ICE AND SNOW HAS BEEN REMOVED, AND THE MILITIA ON TRAFFIC DETAILS HAVE CHANGED FROM THEIR BULKY WINTER OUTFITS TO RELATIVELY TRIM DRESS UNIFORM. THERE ARE ALSO MANY MORE MILITIA ON DUTY THAN IS USUALLY THE CASE. MOST OF THE CONGRESS DELEGATES ARE HOUSED AT THE ROSSIYA HOTEL, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND HAS BEEN CLOSED TO EVERYONE ELSE.

4. CPUSA CHIEF AND PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL GUS HALL ARRIVED IN TOWN VIA PAN AM YESTERDAY, TRAVELLING FIRST CLASS, AND WAS GREETED AT THE AIRPORT BY CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBER AND CC SECRETARY PONOMAREV. (A MEMBER OF THE INDIAN EMBASSY AT SHEREMETEVO AIRPORT WHEN YESTERDAY'S FLIGHT ARRIVED SAW AMBASSADOR CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 02734 231841Z

STOESSEL THERE AND REPORTED BACK TO HIS EMBASSY THAT THE AMBASSADOR WAS ON HAND TO GREET GUS HALL. IN FACT, BY COINCIDENCE THE AMBASSADOR'S MOTHER ARRIVED ON THAT SAME PAN AM FLIGHT).

5. MOST OF THE MOSCOW-BASED SOVIET LEADERS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN MEETING ARRIVING FOREIGN DELEGATIONS AT THE AIRPORT. THE ONES WHO HAVE SO FAR FAILED TO BE LISTED AS PRESENT AT THE AIRPORT INCLUDE: BREZHNEV, GRISHIN, KIRILENKO, KOSYGIN,

MAZUROV, PODGORNYY, AND KAPITONOV.
STOESSEL

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